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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000605

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT FIRES MINISTERS OF FINANCE AND SECURITY

Classified By: A/DCM SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (U) SUMMARY. A presidential decree firing the ministers of finance and security was broadcast on national television last night. The governors of Conakry and Boke were also fired. No official reason was given for the dismissals. Rumors of possible dismissals have been circulating for weeks. END SUMMARY.

MINISTER OF FINANCE

¶2. (SBU) The new Minister of Finance, Karamokoba Camara, was promoted from within the Ministry from his previous position as secretary general, which was the highest ranked position under the minister. Camara is a Soussou from Maritime Guinea. He studied public finance at the University of Conakry, and later gave lectures on economics for several years at the same university. He attended economics courses at the French Institute of Public Administration. Prior to his appointment as secretary general, Camara worked in the Guinean Treasury as a Division Chief, and then as a personal adviser to an unidentified former minister of finance. Camara graduated from high school with Louceny Nabe, the new Minister of Mines who was recently appointed to his position.

¶3. (SBU) Some Embassy contacts within the Ministry of Finance have criticized Camara in the past for allegedly blocking economic reforms. One source reported that Ousmane Dore, his predecessor, attempted to replace Camara during the last round of civil service appointments, but was blocked.

MINISTER OF SECURITY

¶4. (SBU) Diane Elhadj Madifing, the new Minister of Security, has been an Embassy contact for a number of years. His studies included programs in criminology and cryptology in Cairo and Algeria, as well as a degree in history from a Guinean university. Just prior to his ministerial appointment, Madifing was working as the &Technical Counselor for Cooperation at the presidency. From 1996 to 2007, he was the Inspector General of Security Services.

¶5. (S) Embassy local staff who have worked with Madifing in the past describe him as a person of &courage who has been generally supportive of U.S. Mission objectives, including a major drug burning event under former Prime Minister Kouyate. (COMMENT. The cocaine later turned out to be manioc flour. END COMMENT). Local staff also said that Madifing has been a useful &confidential informant, in the past.

¶6. (C) Madifing had actually met with RSO LES earlier in the week and said that he was hoping that Damba, the previous minister, would be able to effectively fight the drug trade.

However, Madifing said that Damba had been holding late-night meetings on his own with key drug traffickers, and speculated that Damba might be receiving financial compensation to assist the traffickers. Madifing said he personally went to see the president and requested permission for the police to arrest the president's son and notorious drug kingpin, Ousmane Conte. According to Madifing, Conte told him to go ahead and arrest Ousmane and that the president did not approve of his son's activities. Madifing said that when he relayed the message to Damba, the former minister did not take any action.

COMMENT

¶6. (SBU) Former Finance Minister Ousmane Dore, once considered the most committed reformer under Kouyate and credited for the reinstatement of Guinea's IMF Poverty Reduction Strategy program in 2008, has been the subject of mounting criticism in recent months. Even under Kouyate, his successful efforts to block access to key government financial accounts at the Central Bank made him unpopular among certain political players, especially Conte's old guard cronies. Rumors of Dore's possible dismissal have been circulating for more than a year.

¶7. (S) Mohammed Damba, the former Minister of Security, has also been the subject of rumors lately. Sensitive reporting has linked him to narcotics trafficking, both as a recipient of bribes, and as a possible impediment to the biggest narco-rings.

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¶8. (SBU) Embassy has minimal information on the two governors who were fired. The former governor of Boke was arrested a few weeks ago, allegedly on charges of complicity in a narco-trafficking, although the charges were later dismissed. Malick Sanon, the former governor of Conakry, who was appointed under Kouyate, is considered a controversial figure. He has had several land dispute cases filed against him for allegedly selling private citizens' lands without permission and then keeping the profits for himself. END
COMMENT.

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